A DESIGN FOR LIVING[1]

I

THE NEW ELEMENT IN THE MODERN TEMPER

WHEN I received this invitation I hesitated before accepting it. Did I have anything to say on the great theme of value to others? We are doing a great deal of talking to ourselves, but the present condition of the world makes one prefer silence to speech. Did this invitation justify an exception? I remembered a former visit to the Rice Institute; and the impression then gained that if one had anything to say on a serious subject, it could be said here with the assurance of a sympathetic hearing, has persisted ever since. I then put the question: What is your most definite and convincing belief about Christianity at the present time? What is the reason for the hope that is in you? I found that my convictions were being shaken down into simplicity; that certain ideas were becoming more and more assuring, and that these ideas were contributing to a firmness of purpose and peace of mind, in spite of the critical state of the world. And as I brooded, the desire to impart to others what was proving so helpful to myself seemed to justify the acceptance of the invitation, and it is in this spirit I enter upon our inquiry.

At the close of the eighteenth century, Schleiermacher wrote a book entitled *Speeches on Religion to its Cultured Despisers*. I should like to describe these lectures as "Ad-

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dresses on Religion for Young Inquirers." I shall not confine attention to the special outlook of the young; but they have the paramount claim, for they must soon inherit our responsibilities; and beneath the ebb and flow of their medium thoughts, the younger generation is intensely interested in an ordered view of life. For that reason I am calling the series a discussion of a design for living.

Socrates used to say that the primary quality of intelligence was to know how to define things correctly, to use words in right relation to thought, and to bring our general ideas into harmony with a pattern of living. This quality is rare today. We speak, for example, of the modern man as though we were describing a creature who can easily be defined, something so simple and unified you have only to look at him in order to know what he is. This seems easy, until someone asks us to tell what we mean by the modern man—define him. At once you find yourself in difficulties. When you look directly at him you realize that the modern man is not one but many. His name is legion. He is a creature with many heads: the animal man, the economic man, and the spiritual man; and these several heads are engaged in an endless dispute that never reaches any decisions. Woodrow Wilson described this strange being when he said that "the mind reigns but does not govern. We are governed by a tumultuous house of commons, made up of the passions, and the ruling passion is prime minister and coerces the sovereign." An age that professes an elaborate regard for rationality is distinguished by a tendency to follow unregulated emotions in all directions. The essential discipline for this chaotic and adventurous mentality is to confront it with a design for living; to bring to bear upon its intense activity a creative idea of such potency as to draw its contrary elements into a unified whole.

Look at it under the similitude of one of our Lord's parables, the parable of the tower builder. Before you set out to build a tower, you must know three things: is it worth building? have you enough material? do you really want to build it, and are you willing to stick to it until you finish it? The development of a personality is a far more difficult task than the building of a tower, and the most important of all is the necessity of having a definite plan before you begin to build at all. This is not easy, for as Coleridge says:

> With respect to any final aim or end the greater part of mankind live at hazard. They have no certain harbour in view, nor direct their course by any fixed star. But to him that knoweth not the port to which he is bound, no wind can be favourable, neither can he who has not yet determined at what mark he is to shoot, direct his arrow aright.

Such observations accord well with our mature reflections, for we often think that had we our life to live over we could make a better thing of it. Sometimes all that we get is a Pisgah sight, looking out, like Moses, upon a land that is never to be ours. The feeling of uncertainty about the plan of living is common to the greatest believers. They are obliged to confess "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." But man is a creative being and his plan of life will grow with his growth. He will reach a place where he can say: "I know in part, but I know, and to know in part is to know enough," and thus, like Browning's old musician, solace the spirit with the reflection:

> But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
> Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are!
> And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
> That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.

The first question in the Shorter Catechism is "What is man's chief end?" and the answer is "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." This is an expression of a reasoned philosophy that was quite satisfactory

to the times in which the statement was made. It is a good answer—indeed it is a great answer—and to multitudes since those days it has been accepted as the final solution of the riddle of existence. But the altered idea-systems of the modern world make it necessary to reopen the question. It may be that we shall decide to accept the answer as valid for ourselves, but we must do it in our own way, and in the light of the problems we feel to be vital for our own experience.

A design for living worthy of the name is really an attempt to answer this question, and in some form the problem is the inspiration of the best thought of our time. In recent years we have been engrossed with political and economic questions; but we are now extending our interest far beyond into an intangible region where we are asking a much greater question: What is man's relation as a personal being to the universe around him? Whither is he going? What are his powers for participating in a complex of enduring values? If a man decides to live in harmony with the highest principles he knows, what assurance has he that the universe will help him? Can he believe that God is willing to meet a man on the pathway of his highest endeavors? If we are to attain abiding happiness, we must find some purpose in the universe that has particular regard for human thought and desire. No man can have a private universe, nor can he mould it to suit his individual tastes. But at least he must have some assurance that it is possible to relate himself to a universal order that embraces the whole round of possible experience—both the good and the evil—obedience to which will lead him to the fulfillment of his highest endeavors. Unless we can believe in such a central authority, unless we can fit our plan of living to such a universal pattern, we will not find it possible to hold to any definite intention in face

of prevailing trends. Thus it comes about that our design for living becomes definitely religious, for religion is man's serious attempt to transfer his allegiance from himself to something other and higher than himself. Religion is the effort to adjust human endeavors to the operation of Divine purposes through which alone durable values and abiding relations can be attained. A mind so directed will surely find its way to happiness. By making God's purpose the chief end of existence, man will enjoy Him forever. If peace can be found in this changeable world it will issue from such a direct and simple faith. Multitudes have found their way to this goal of human aspiration. They have known the peace of God that passeth all understanding. For them the answer of the Catechism is valid; they believe in it on the testimony of their own experience.

It is here that a wedge of misgiving has been driven into the fabric of our security. Many no longer believe in an ordered universe; and others who hold to some sense of order are either inclined to think it is unknowable, or identify order with the persistence of evil. The universe, in spite of what science tells of its cosmic arrangements, appears from the moral point of view a thing of shreds and patches. Thus the modern feeling expresses itself in the pessimistic conclusion, "Who will show us any good?"

It is plainly the duty of the religious man to contradict this depressing conclusion. His answer should be: "Lord, lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us." He must not only believe this, but explain it in terms of living thought. He dare not view the world as a spectator. He is a responsible participant and must not be content to indulge intellectual curiosity about the many debatable themes, as though he were a looker on at life, but give reasons for the hope that is in him. If he believes in a purpose sufficient

to carry man to the goal of his hopes, then the least he can do is to make it intelligible to others. He may fail to convince the world, but at any rate he can gain its respect by trying to live in harmony with it. That is why I am keeping young inquirers in mind; for if we believe that we have found a purpose in the universe sufficient to sustain and strengthen our life, then we ought to do all we can to make others understand it.

At this point I should like to mention one aspect of our inquiry that we shall consider more thoroughly later on. It is this: What do we mean when we say that we believe in God? I take it we are saying something more than that we believe that God exists. The Epicureans believed this, yet their gods dwelt "far beyond the flaming walls of the world." Their intentions, if any, were hidden in the inscrutable mystery of complete aloofness. When we say we believe in God we mean that there is sufficient evidence of a Divine purpose embedded in the texture of human experience to guide our minds through the jungle of earthly interests to the goal of our hopes. This is the form of belief expressed in the Old Testament proverb: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." That is to say, where there is no belief in God sufficient to influence conduct, people perish because they lack power to restrain the downward tendencies of human nature. Not only does such a belief hold in check the lower propensities of man, but arouses and directs the highest aspirations towards definite objectives. A definition of religion will help us to understand this. The best common definition I know is: "Religion is man's effective desire to be in right relation to the power manifest in the universe." The most influential element at first is the sense of dependence, upon a power not ourselves, which appears at all human levels. That some-

thing on which we depend determines our destiny. Man cannot feel at home in the universe until he has found some place where he may lay up his inner life. He must have something to love, and that loves him in return; something to confide in and rest upon, that becomes a central authority that directs and sustains him in his earthly pilgrimage. Katherine Mansfield confessed this feeling when she said: "I do think that one must have some big thing to live by, and one reason for the great poverty of art is that artists have got no religion, and they are, in the words of the Bible, sheep without a shepherd. One can't drift, and everybody nearly is drifting nowadays." This deeply implanted instinct impels us to come to an understanding with the power manifest in the universe around us. As the search becomes more and more rational, the moral sense develops and man becomes his most searching critic. The sense of sin and alienation develops; and eventually the quest takes the form of a passionate desire for moral adjustment to the will and authority of the power upon which he depends. Out of this feeling grows the effort to offer something in the way of compensation, in rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices, until finally there emerges the passionate desire to make atonement for sin, which is the essential element in historical religions. Thus religion becomes a self-conscious moral quest for permanent adjustment to the power manifest in the universe until it takes the form of a longing for a human life in God, for some type of incarnation, in order that the infinite God may come within the domain of finite man and meet him on his own ground. By such means God draws near to man and man, losing his homesickness and dread of God, finds a new center of stability to which he may yield himself a willing and contented being.

The historical religions, especially those that have de-

veloped systematic thought-forms, show that the most distinctive element is the passion for moral adjustment. There were times in man's history when this passion was the most distinctive element in his period, when moral adjustment was the ruling category of prevalent idea-systems. A typical example of this is the synthesis between reason and revelation expressed in the theology of Aquinas and the poetry of Dante. In the Middle Ages religion was the mother of the arts; and the passion for moral adjustment, the ruling idea of the world. Dominated as he was by the idea of eternity, man refused to accept the affairs of this life as a final register of values. At other times, the splendor of this world becomes the rival of the religious spirit and the desire for adjustment is weakened, while a new system of values is developed. Diminished spiritual feeling has been until recently a characteristic feature of modern thought. The economic man has seemed more important than the spiritual man. But though weakened, changing conditions may arouse the spiritual feeling until it again becomes dominant. An awakening of this feeling seems to me to be the most distinctive element in the modern temper.

The pendulum-like movement of emphasis—now on this world, now on the next—brings to light the element of rhythm in historical process. The course of human life does not, as some suppose, move continuously from lower to higher forms of expression, neither is the movement always in the direction of moral perfection. History moves in rhythms, like the tide; sometimes it is efflorescent, at other times it is catastrophic. In an efflorescent period we are as William James would say, once-born men: tough-minded, secular, unbelieving, and very much at home in the world. To such a temperament religion makes little appeal, since interests nearer at hand seem more important. In catastrophic

periods, man is twice-born, tender-minded, acutely aware of religious needs, and, far from being at home in this world, is anxious to relate himself to the world to come. To such a temperament adjustment to the purpose of the universe is a prime essential of happiness. To know what that purpose is may become the ruling principle of a new idea-system. It was so in the Middle Ages, and it may be so again. The tough-minded man may be so engrossed with material interests as to ignore the spiritual aspects of life; but times of change arouse the pilgrim urge, and man will convince himself that rest cannot be found in a material realm. When time shakes down all things into simplicity, he realizes that most of the things that men strive for lie outside the domain of the spirit. What is wanted is mental poise, courage to face the brute facts of the world around us, and a standing-ground in the world to come. Thus develops that highly dramatic revolt of the spirit against the tyranny of circumstance, the quest for a purpose in the universe that is working in harmony with the spiritual necessities of man. When this feeling becomes paramount, it turns the mind to philosophy. Old men dream dreams and young men see visions, and splendid conceptions of the City of God arise above the ruins of the earthly state.

Such reflections have led me to think that we are gradually passing from the dominion of a secular idea-system, the final stage of renaissance culture—a conception until recently believed to be the goal of history—into something chaotic, unstable, and disturbing, that, if rightly guided by an adequate philosophy, will bring us to the threshold of a new renaissance in which after many wanderings man's weary spirit will return to the broad highway that leadeth to life eternal. We have passed out of a progress-conscious era into a crisis-conscious age. As the Russian philosopher

Berdyaev expresses it: "The rhythms of history have become catastrophic." It is a period of extreme instability, yet as Whitehead observes: "History shows that the unstable ages have usually been the creative ages." If we fearlessly face the formidable aspects of our time, it will arouse us to seek the purpose of God. It will also inspire us to form a design for living in harmony with it.

I have intimated that the new element in the modern temper is a longing for rejuvenation. This is, rightly understood, a desire to find amid the chaotic changes of the world a place where man may lay up his inner life; something to love, follow, and confide in, of sufficient authority to bring him to the goal of his reasonable hopes. This desire, however, is not the result of a clear vision of the true ends of living, but the ultimate effect of a loss of confidence in an earth-centered conception of values, which until recently appeared to guarantee the stability of a secular scheme of living. This loss has hardened into a feeling of self-distrust that is responsible for a sense of insecurity that is spreading through all classes of society. It makes the individual realize that he cannot face the future alone. But it goes further than this, for it casts suspicion upon the value of all those beliefs, institutions, and social habits that have been the products of human endeavor. The past has lost its power to guide us, and we look out upon a whirlpool wherein the stream of life has entered upon an unpredictable phase; a whirlpool covered with the debris of a thousand schemes for living. How can the individual rebuild his world from such broken fragments, or face the future otherwise than with gloomy anticipations? Such a feeling is the malady of the modern mind. It plainly suggests the necessity for a design for living, but does not indicate what the true ends of life are.

At this point it is expedient to speak more specifically of the causes of this widespread feeling of self-distrust. It has developed from a loss of confidence in a secular program of living. The economic and social trends of the modern world have been for the most part influenced by a naturalistic philosophy of values; a conception that teaches us that the worth-while objectives of human endeavor are to be sought for and realized in this world only. These trends were not irreligious, but they were definitely non-religious and secular. The collapse of faith in the efficacy of this program has again brought to light man's religious necessities. A consideration of certain phases of this altered outlook will make my main contention clear.

There are many reasons for the present skepticism about the secular program, but among them I wish to mention three.

1. The first is found in the peculiar mentality of the time. When the terrible strains of the great war ended, multitudes sought relief in going direct to nature without moral control. Just as sailors, after months of confinement aboard ship, will upon reaching port go on a spree, so the post-war era sought a vivid sense of life in emotional and sensational experiences. This led to a break with moral tradition, to an unrestricted exploration of forbidden paths, a savoring of prohibited pleasures, until today the world is cursed with a sick fatigue, boredom, and satiety with life on a material plane. The whole world is suffering from an exhausted and overstrained emotionalism, and the backslider is filled with his own ways. Self-indulgence has lost its appeal and man is bitterly conscious of the fact that the way of the transgressor is hard. No one has more trenchantly expressed this mood than Richard Aldington:

I like the men and women of my age,
I like their hardness,
For though we are a battered and rather bitter set,
Still we have faced the facts, we have been pretty honest.
But, sitting here brooding over the hard faces,
I wonder if we have not rejected too much,
If we have not hardened ourselves too much
Making it impossible to break out of our self-prisons?

This profound sense of satiety often turns sour and cynical. The years are stale and unprofitable, and many have little energy to seek relief in proper directions and less desire to think of the possibility of moral recovery. This soreness of mind, this sadness of spirit is a common cause of the ineffectiveness of proposed remedies, and it also accounts for the disinclination to think deeply about present conditions, as well as justifies the impulse to ignore the formidable aspects, which must frankly be faced if man is to work out his moral regeneration. A mind that has suffered disappointment in its fondest hopes, and feels that it has been betrayed by the very things in which it trusted, will find it difficult to take interest in any suggestion for improvement. This is a very old attitude. When Moses came to the Israelites in Egypt with the good news of a Divine deliverance, he spoke most eloquently of a new life beyond the desert in a land of promise, flowing with milk and honey; but it is recorded that the people would not listen because of their soreness of mind and impatience of spirit. The simple proposal that they should think of their deliverance was an added sorrow to their already overburdened hearts. Every prophet has had to face this skepticism, and it is very common today. A primary cause of the failure of the great proposals for world betterment is to be traced to this soreness of mind. The hardest task of the educator is to make people think things through. But there is one point that touches most of us where we live. This sense of futility arises from a growing

suspicion that man cannot fulfill his life on a material plane. If we can persuade ourselves that the source of spiritual satisfaction is to be sought for in a higher realm, then we may go in search of the Divine purpose in the universe, for a design for living in harmony with it.

2. A more serious aspect of disillusion is found in the fact that science is definitely setting limits to its power over nature, and is suggesting that if the world is to return to normal modes of living it must come from a sanction of self-control to be sought for in a region beyond nature. The belief that science had power to guide man to the goal of his earthly hopes was almost universal before the great war. Science at no time made any such claim; but the effect of scientific progress on the popular mind was sufficient to justify this optimistic expectation. But we now know that this hope is not going to be realized, and none know it better than the men of science, who are confessing it with telling effect. Science can put into man's hands the finest tools, but it does not profess to furnish a moral sanction for their proper use. The happiness of mankind depends upon the right use of energy potentials. Science is steadily increasing man's power over nature; each advance intensifies the strain and enlarges the responsibility of those who benefit by it. Science can definitely suggest the moral need, but it does not furnish the moral sanction. On this very account, the destruction of our present civilization through war is threatened by the perversion of these great endowments. So keenly is this felt that some have proposed a moratorium on invention. This, beyond question, is a counsel of despair. What can safeguard the race from destructive energies is not the stoppage of scientific progress, but a whole-hearted acceptance of the responsibility that such progress lays upon mankind. Every stage of scientific growth enriches humanity,

increases the possibility of error and wrong usage, and suggests the necessity of developing a type of character in man that will guarantee the use of these resources in the most constructive way. The richer man grows in material power, the greater is the need for intellectual and moral growth. What the progress of science indicates at the present moment is the failure of man to match his material progress with moral stability. Moreover, science is suggesting that man should seek moral power wherever it is available, and more and more it is evident that the realm in which to find it lies outside the material world. Man must be fitted to use and enjoy the fruits of his research. His destiny cannot be fulfilled by limiting his progress. He must bravely face the future; and as one after another of nature's secrets are told him, use this high endowment in harmony with a sense of responsibility, which can only be developed through a design for living in harmony with the highest possible interpretation that can be put upon the universe. At present so many are engrossed with the search for animal comfort, or vainly hoping to preserve their physical existence, they do not think of these high matters. The multitudes must be wisely led. This is the responsibility resting upon men of education and intelligence. I believe that a thorough determination to think things out to the roots—the only salutary form of radicalism—will inspire the thinker with a necessity more imperious than any material aspect of his experience can suggest, to relate life in its highest endeavor to the purpose of God. The wise observations found in recent addresses made to scientific associations on both sides of the Atlantic indicate that the men of science are fully aware of the urgency of the problem, and ready to associate themselves with all others who seek its rational solution.

3. A third aspect of disillusion may be called the humanistic phase. Humanism is a belief that all durable values issue from human effort, and its appeal to our time was largely due to belief in a certain dogma of progress that reached its culmination at the end of the nineteenth century. This dogma was only one hundred and fifty years old, but its influence was paramount in the optimistic outlook of the pre-war era. It affirmed that nature herself was interested in the progressive moral development of her children. There were neither gaps nor disruptions in the course of history, and each generation would certainly be better than the one that preceded it. Science would shortly discover a cosmic law that would show that the perfect type of man and social order were among the delightful anticipations of the immediate future. It was confidently believed that this law had appeared in a loose application of the idea of evolution to general philosophical speculations. Men of science held aloof from this optimistic movement; and some of them, especially Huxley, frankly said that this favorable interpretation of nature's processes was both unscientific and untrue. Nature was not a school of the moral virtues and had no interest in man's ethical development. Social progress could arise only when man applied to nature's ways, a sanction that was derived from something beyond nature. Few listened to this cautionary voice in 1893, but the war changed all that. The dogma is now universally discredited. We are the children of a shattered tradition, and so far from thinking that man is made in the Divine image, it is not difficult to place him in a lower scale than the beasts. How, then, can rational beings build their hopes for betterment on the delusion of humanism, when men are proving their incapacity to govern themselves aright, and where so few have a rational notion of their eternal relations?

Disappointment with things as they are, however, must not be taken as a final estimate of man's deeper thoughts. For one thing, we cannot be happy in a world where there is no progress at all. Even though we have lost faith in the nineteenth century dogma, it does not mean that we are going to accept the pessimism of Bertrand Russell, who, while insisting that science only must be our guide, tells us that the only foundation on which science will allow us to build our hopes is one of "unyielding despair." Madness lies that way, and man will have none of it. The human spirit is too elastic to follow such depressing conclusions for long; and deep within the texture of modern experience is the longing for rejuvenation, a persistent belief in and search for a governing authority in the universe, on which man may lay his inner life. This goes beyond the idea of a cosmic rhythm, and is definitely moving towards faith in a purpose that actually reveals an interest in mankind and is fitted to the emergencies of our mortal existence. This desire is developing into a rational scrutiny of all the evidence available, in the hope of coming into communion with that central authority which alone can direct man's life to the goal of his hopes.

Evidence for such an authority lies before us, if we are wise enough to seek it in a liberal way. Barriers that formerly kept our knowledge in logic-tight compartments are yielding to more thorough investigation, and the scheme of thought forming around recent developments in science definitely points towards the unification of knowledge. It may be that we shall find it more convenient to use energy rather than substance as the category of being. At least it is a dynamic conception, and more in accord with faith in personal agency than the static notion of substance. To understand even partially this fundamental idea of reality

is to become acquainted with the final cause of the universe, and to find out what man's status is to be. I believe we have now learned that it is a mistake to assume that nothing can be true that cannot be proved by rigid methods of investigation. If there be an original element in present-day science of real philosophical significance, it is that there are realms of truth beyond the reach of the test tube and the measuring rod, but not outside the domain of the spirit. Recent pronouncements of men of the greatest scientific attainments are entirely favorable to this view. The other day a former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science said that "Faith is as important in the pursuit of scientific knowledge as intuition and reason, while today the significance of science as a principal source of revelation is almost universally recognized." In another section of his address he observed that "It is desirable to accord reality in equal measure to all kinds of knowledge everywhere, and so to view the universe as broadly and impartially as possible. The transcendent importance of love and good will in all human relations is shown by the mighty beneficent effect upon the individual and society."

Science is standing on the frontiers of a brave new world. It has steadily pushed back the curtain of ignorance, until after remarkable progress it is again confronting a new kind of ignorance, which shapes itself in mysteries that must be approached in a different mood and by a different method than that by which science determines the significance of the material world. In fact, every valid avenue of approach to reality ends at a frontier where faith must be our guide. But faith will not attach itself to chance or blind fate; neither will it rest contentedly upon any theory of impersonal cosmic rhythm. Faith must attach itself to a person. The desire to find a purpose in the universe can be satisfied only

when man communes with a Divine manifestation that has particular regard for him as a thinking being. Will you not then approach the inquiry into the purpose of God in the spirit of a great Victorian poet:

> You've seen the world
> —The beauty and the wonder and the power,
> The shape of things, their colours, lights and shades,
> Changes, surprises—and God made them all!
> —For what?